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Greenfield, Kilgobbin, near Dublin
November 28. 1861

Dear Mr May

Yesterday I recd from Miss Estlin – via Eliza Wigham, Edinburgh, your long and most interesting letter which you enclosed to me for her, and which being sealed I of course had not read before. As she wished to have your letter to read to some of her anti-slavery friends at a meeting in Bristol tomorrow, I had only time to run over its contents for my own edification, not having an opportunity of showing it to my wife who would have liked to ~~it~~ read it also. However I have petitioned for another loan and then she can have this pleasure. [You may possibly remember that in one of my Standard letters I resented in a jocular way the accusation of one of your New England celebrities in the Autocrat or somebody that the English were ignorant about America. Well, I draw in my horns in this particular & admit that it is generally true. American geography, American institutions, American politics, American parties, &c. &c. &c. are very little understood by the majority of all classes of our people. I am continually astounded by the dense ignorance of some from whom something else might be expected on these subjects. Hence are lots of absurd mistakes & misunderstandings. Yesterday a barrister, a young aristocrat, belonging to a high family called in on me about some business. Something about the United States was started in the course of conversation. He could not understand what they were quarrelling about. He had heard some talk of liberating the slaves. It was most disgusting.— He thought slavery a very good thing for the South.— They could not live in the South without slavery.— He had met with several Southerners — very nice, gentlemen who would no more illtreat their slaves than they would their cow or their horses. See what had happened to Jamaica — all ruined for want of slavery. I referred them to some recent books written by Americans which show that the liberated slaves labored [illegible] cheerily and profitably for themselves — and that if they did not do so for their masters, the masters or former employers were to blame.— Oh! he would not believe any thing the Americans would say. And so forth. This man is a lawyer — the author of a popular law book, who talks about human beings as meant to be merely the tools of other men.] But this kind of talk is doubtless common in America. And that he thinks so is due as I have always thought to American teaching. Generally speaking people here are ignorant, careless, indifferent — they don't trouble themselves to understand your affairs and so long as your government & a great portion of the people, so far as we can see, are willing to back up slaveholding, provided the Union can be maintained I cannot see how an abolitionist can blame them — especially as the chance of slavery going by the board would be greater if the Confederate States stood alone than if it continued to receive the support of the Northern people & government. That the abolitionists who do not profess to be nonresistants should enter warmly into the war for the maintenance of the national existence I think perfectly right. But I confess I do not comprehend the reasoning which satisfies Garrison, H. C. Wright & a few others that armed force is more justifiable in the present case any more than in any other circumstances.

If it be wrong in self defence it must be wrong
on national defence. From the great confidence
felt in W. L. G. as one who adhered to principle as
his guide in all past circumstances, the feeling
of being puzzled & confounded by his course has
been greater than in regard to any other
individual amongst you. I am no nonresistant
— I don't regard the nonresistant doctrine as
tenable or natural or fitted for beings with
such passions as we are. It has never to my
knowledge been tested on a large scale
although a few isolated cases can be cited —
and its impracticability has never been made
clearly shown than in the present course of
those who professed to be guided by its principles
in the United States at the present time. I
have no controversy with them — but I regret
the shake it has given to the confidence of
some very excellent people here — including
some of the Slaves' fastest and most faithful
friends. My friend James Haughton, a
thorough going peace man, is greatly confounded;
and being utterly simple minded & unable to
make allowance for circumstances which lead
to unfaithfulness to the principles he regards
as sacred — there is no satisfying him, tho
[illegible] I do not quite know how to ex-
plain the discrepancy which I can excuse
on the ground that the offenders have the
natural feelings & passions of Americans.
he cannot do so. He has always relied upon
you as a true apostle of peace & nonresistance
and it is out of his power to see any good reason why
he should hold his long cherished principles in abey-

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aims when they were brought to a practical test. It is so with Eliza Wigham Smith & some others. Then when the cry of the Garrisonian abolitionists for years has been "no Union with Slaveholders" it looks a little puzzling that as soon as the Slaveholders left the Union, the abolitionists should join in the effort to keep them especially as the Government and a large portion of the people disclaim any wish to interfere with their Slave property. You think the determination to get rid of Slavery is the chief motive power in the North. To me with my means of judging, the determination to preserve the national dominion undiminished seems a much stronger motive with the masses and certainly with the government. I feel sure that with all our ignorance, indifference and interested selfishness, an open anti-Slavery crusade at the North would have called forth an enthusiastic response in England, which no dislike of our aristocracy to democracy, nor any love of our merchants & manufacturers for cotton, could have kept from manifesting itself in acts of [illegible] cordial sympathy. Mr Seward's unconcealed dislike of England has had a very bad effect & we are continually reminded that in the Russian war and during the Indian mutiny the feeling of the northern multitude was hostile to England. My own impression is that with the majority of your people it was popular for your government to offend, insult & mortify England, & I am sure that in many cases in which this feeling was unmistakeably manifested nothing has withheld us from a war except the unpopularity of war with America and the sense that great injury would be done to millions of our own working people by a struggle which must cut off the cotton supply. Nevertheless this has been attended with a sense of painful humiliation which does not exist at present.

About 10 days ago a young man from Worcester, Mass. Mr Edward Hammond brought me a note of introduction from Mr Sumner. He has come over to Dublin as your consul at this port. I obtained comfortable & respectable lodgings for him with a friend of my own, a grand-daughter of Richard Shackleton, the schoolfellow, friend & correspondent of the great philosophic statesman & orator Edmund Burke, the [illegible] greatest of all Irishmen. I also obtained him an introduction to some useful acquaintances & gave him some useful information & hints for his guidance here. He seems a steady, prudent young man & is anti slavery in the present prevalent Northern sense, though I wd not regard him as one of the abolitionists. From a few questions I put to him, I judge that he knows little about them personally. He is to dine with us here next Sunday. He called on me today to hear the news which is now making a great stir & which if not greatly qualified or explained away may lead to a very dangerous difference between your government & ours. You have doubtless heard ere this of the San Jacinto U.S. war steamer having stopped a British vessel carrying the mails & taken from on board her in the West Indies 4 American Confederate commissioners (Mason of Virginia among the rest) who had run the blockade & taken passage from St. Thomas for England. Every one here regard this, if true, as a high handed act of piracy & disregard of international comity, which must be followed by reparation & apology or by war. Indeed I see no escape from one or the other horn of this dilemma. If the act was really sanctioned by your government I cannot but look on it as a political blunder & act of folly of the most stupendous kind. To war with the South was quite enough without adding to it a war with England who is now more wealthy, powerful & united than at any former time. Our present premier Lord is not a man of high principle — but he is nevertheless highly popular. He is 75 years old — he has wonderful ability, pluck & endurance, & he is liked for the way in which he has stood by Italy in her late struggles. Nevertheless the anti democratic feeling in England is now so strong that his majority in the House of Commons is very small — & consequently he has but an insecure tenure of power. Under such circumstances much will depend as far as he is concerned on the spirit he shews in the present emergency. If he shows the white feather, he is gone irretrievably. If he stands up like a man for the honour of England in reference to this affair of the Jacinto, he will ensure the continuance & probably the increase of his parliamentary majority. I am extremely sorry for this occurrence. It was a foolish, stupid blunder & I hope it will be promptly disavowed. The English worship success. They are an arrogant overbearing, conceited people who think themselves far better than other people — an opinion in which I regard them as greatly mistaken. When one talks of people in the mass how liable we are to appear unjust — seeing that in our own self examination we are individually obliged to reflect on ourselves, & to make excuses.

As to the Festival I feel disposed to send you my money in case collect. I don't see why it should not be upheld because Mrs Chapman has changed her mind. As far as I know all who have given will be as likely to give to the Festival as to the Society. No special, personal, application having been made the collection will not be as large as formerly — I have had very many letters from Mrs Chapman of late, some of them very long which I found it very hard to understand, but of which the drift seemed to be that the events of the day in the United States were doing more for the cause than all past agitation could efforts. My opinion is that as long as slavery lasts the abolitionists should continue their efforts — and that until we find out an organization more faithful & more able than the present, we should give them any little assistance in our power. If I knew of a better, which of course I do not I think I would not hesitate to say so, & to give my vote in its favour. I wonder what Wendell Phillips is doing. I have heard nothing of him since he made that speech in which he alluded to the invasion of Canada. — When the box of Reports reaches me I will make the most effective distribution in my power — though I fear it will be difficult to dispose of such a number as you mention. However I will take heart of grace and send it to several to whom I never thought of before. Owing to the size of the book the postage will be a heavier item than heretofore. If the unfortunate affairs of the Fenians should end in a war, I need not tell you that English sympathies with every thing connected with the Free States (abolition included) will be woefully put back. However nothing of this kind can diminish the regard that we have for one another, knowing as we do that if our advice had been taken slavery would have been swept away long ago and the long train of evils avoided which has followed in its baleful train.

Make no apology for sending your love to my wife and me. I know of no one I would more rejoice to see under my roof than you. Of all my American friends I think oftenest of you ~~[illegible]~~ I feel such confidence in your kindness & your

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judgment. I am just now enjoying the unusual luxury of a long evening alone with Mr Webb who is at the present writing making up new curtains of a very primitive pattern for my little drawing room in the country. My two sons and my elder daughter are in town & her sister is finishing up a visit in a neighboring county where she has been since her elder brother's marriage rather more than a month ago. This young man, Alfred by name, lives in my house in town. He is my partner in business & has the weight of it on his shoulders while I take things more lightly than heretofore. For the greater part of the present year until within the last two months the general complaint of depression in trade & business has been nearly as great as I have ever known it. It has latterly improved with us — and the new married man has a great additional stimulus to increased effort. He declares himself much happier than heretofore & I believe he is so — although his long anxious face would not give the idea of great cheerfulness to a stranger. He is anxious by nature — and so am I — but having a broad, rosy face I don't look like Democritus.

We are near the foot of a mountain in a very pretty & somewhat high situation where the wind has great power — and just at the present time it is roaring & careering round our little two storied house in fine style. We are nearly three miles from our nearest intimate acquaintances, so that except for visitors who come to stay & sleep, we seldom see callers in on any day but Sunday.